

May 2, 2002

Two-Year-Old Alien Smuggling Victim Reunited with Mother

SAN DIEGO, CALIF - A two-year old girl who was kidnapped and held in Mexico as collateral by an alien smuggler was reunited with her mother yesterday evening.

Border Patrol agents intercepted a vehicle carrying twelve illegal immigrants on Tuesday, April 30, about seven miles northwest of Yuma. One illegal immigrant, a Brazilian female accompanied by her nine-year old daughter, informed agents that her two-year old daughter had been kidnapped and was being held for ransom by smugglers in Mexico.

Working together, Yuma Sector Border Patrol agents, Mexican and Brazilian consulate officers and a Border Patrol anti-smuggling agent from the San Diego Sector, fluent in Portuguese, questioned the Brazilian female. The woman, desperate and fearing for the life of her child, eventually provided the agents with enough information for them to determine that the child was being held in a hotel room in Mexicali, Baja California.

Border Patrol agents from Yuma and El Centro Sectors provided Mexican Immigration officials with the information, who then rescued the child from her captors. Mexican Immigration officials also took a smuggler into custody and charged her with kidnapping.

"The cooperative efforts of law enforcement officials on both sides of the border made the safe return of this child possible," said San Diego Sector Spokesman Raleigh Leonard. "Smugglers are learning that this is the way that the Border Patrol does business. Behavior like this will not be tolerated on either side of the border."

On Wednesday evening, the toddler was transported to the Port of Entry in Calexico, California, where Border Patrol liaison officers returned her to her mother. The mother and her two daughters were taken to San Diego and are awaiting an immigration hearing.

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